Combe Rail members' magazine - issue #26 Summer 2022

(Combe Rail CIO – Registered charity 1164083)
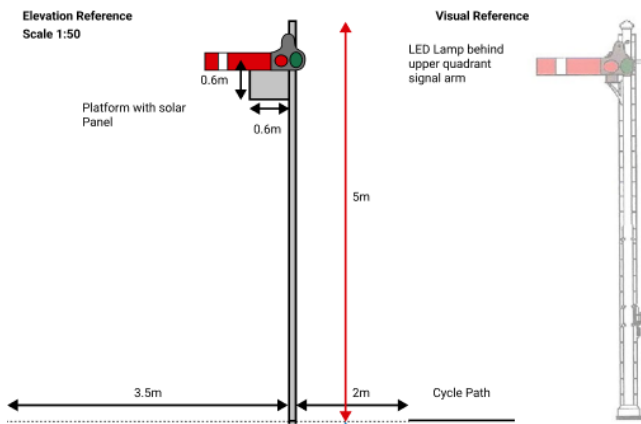www.combe-rail.org.uk   info@combe-rail.org.uk

COMBE RAIL NEWS

Our 2022 AGM will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 15th September by Zoom. As previously, AGM papers will be emailed to you in mid-August. Any member of Combe Rail can stand as a trustee, so if you would like to become more involved in the running of the charity, please put your name forward.

Planning approval for our new (Ilfracombe down outer home) signal post was granted on 5th May. We already have the original 1929 Southern Railway arm, and we are now inviting tenders to supply and install the post. The original post was reinforced concrete, but we are looking at all sensible options, with regard to cost, safety and ongoing maintenance requirements. Options include new tubular steel, rail-built lattice construction or even a second-hand post from Network Rail or another source. If any members have expertise in this area, or useful industry contacts, please let us know!

BIDEFORD REOPENING CAMPAIGN

Combe Rail member and Fremington councillor Tim Steer has been tirelessly recruiting support for his campaign to reopen the Barnstaple-Bideford line. Tim, who is also Chair of the Bideford Heritage Railway Centre and a committee member for the Tarka Rail Association, said: "Bideford needs a railway service because it's the largest town without one in Devon."

Pictured at this recent meeting at Bideford station are (front row) Karen Harely (BRHC) Linda Hellyer (Devon County Councillor for Bideford East) David Ratcliff (Mayor of Bideford) Andrea Davis (Devon County Council Cabinet lead for environment, climate and transport) Doug Busby (Torridge District Council Chair (back row) Steven Trowbridge (BRHC) Clive Fairchild (BRHC) Roger Blake (Director of infrastructure and extensions for Railfuture) Tim Steer (Director and station manager for BRHC) John Skidmore (BRHC)

ILFRACOMBE SIGNAL BOX DIAGRAM
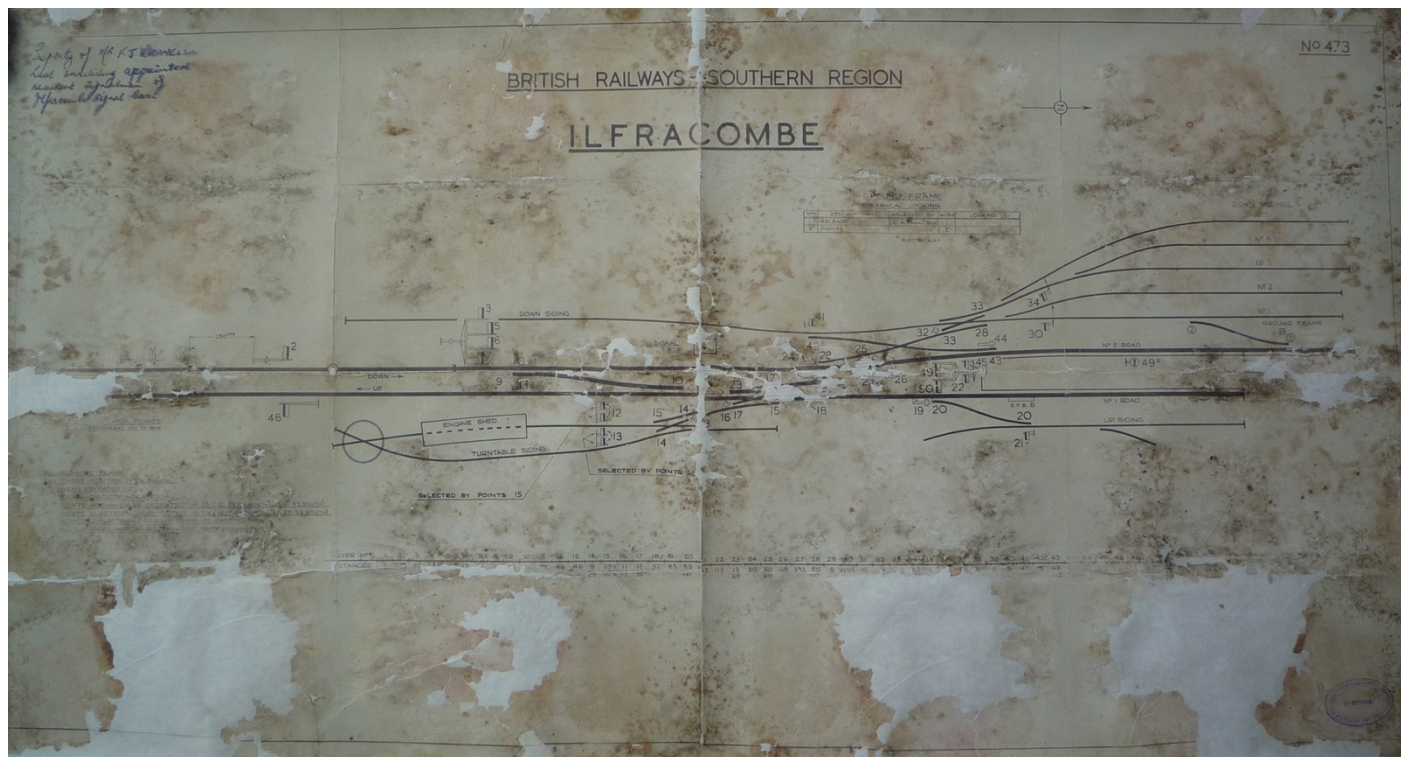
Previous issues of Devon Belle have featured our interviews with Frank Kidwell, Ilfracombe's last signalman. Frank, now aged 94, has very generously donated to Combe Rail the track diagram which hung in Ilfracombe 'box from 1949 to 1967. The diagram is headed "British Railways – Southern Region" so it's possible that another diagram was created when the Ilfracombe line was transferred into the Western Region on 1st January 1963. Ilfracombe 'box finally closed on17th December 1967, when the whole line was singled, all signalling was decommissioned, and Ilfracombe's trackwork was reduced to a runaround loop, operated by a ground frame. (It was on this date that Slade resident Pete Bidgood acquired the down outer home signal arm which hung in his garden for 50 years, and which we are restoring to the trackside.)

Whenever these diagrams were drawn, a second "office" copy was always made, which remained in a drawer at Waterloo Station for reference whilst its twin hung in the signal box. The diagram below appeared recently on Ebay, and like our diagram, it is dated 1949. The Ebay seller described it as a photocopy of the original "office copy", but eagle-eyed readers will quickly spot that the trackwork is incomplete – the turntable road and goods shed roads are missing!
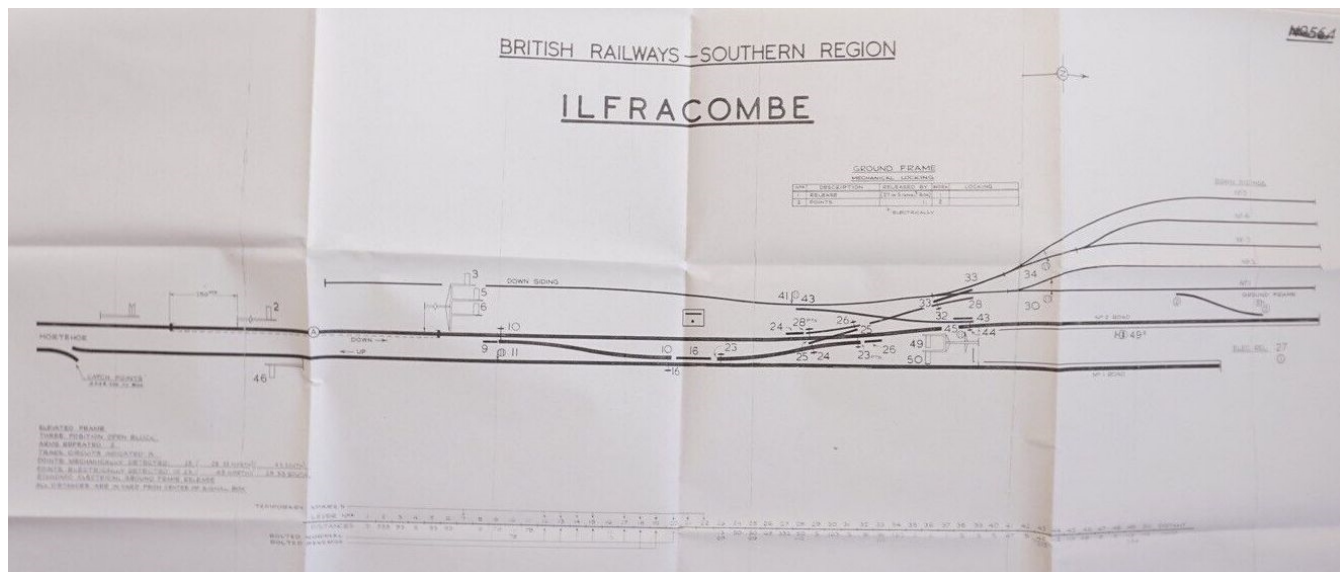
ALSO ON EBAY

We recently acquired the summer 1957 Working Time Table, which hung in Barnstaple Town signal box (you can see the hole in the top left hand corner, where it was suspended, perhaps from the instrument shelf.)

BARNSTAPLE TOWN SIGNAL BOX

(PRIVATE and not for publication)

BR. 31000/11.

SECTION J

BRITISH RAILWAYS
SOUTHERN OPERATING AREA
(WESTERN DISTRICT)

WORKING TIME TABLE
OF
PASSENGER TRAINS

BETWEEN

SALISBURY, EXETER, PLYMOUTH, ILFRACOMBE, BUDE, PADSTOW and BRANCHES

17th JUNE 1957, until further notice

IMPORTANT NOTICE—SPEED OF TRAINS

STEAM TRAINS—Must not exceed a MAXIMUM speed of 85 miles per hour at any point, or 75 miles per hour in the case of former Western Region lines, and all restrictions which impose a lower speed than either of these must be strictly observed.

MAKING UP TIME, STEAM TRAINS—When Passenger Trains are running late, Drivers must endeavour to make up time, but all speed restrictions must be complied with.

WATERLOO.

S. A. FITCH,
Chief Operating Superintendent.

Some interesting features of the Working Time Table are: the inclusion of Pottington Box, the timing codes (e.g. 7a55 actually arrives 1 minute earlier than 7.55 and 8c18 arrives 2 minutes earlier than 8.18) and the 8.10pm light engine path from Ilfracombe (14th September only.)

The timings shown on this page WILL APPLY ON SATURDAYS, 22nd June to 14th September, 1957

J 52 SATURDAYS Torrington, Ilfracombe, Plymouth, Exeter and Salisbury

UP		To Exmouth	To Taunton		To Exmouth					To Taunton	LE	To Exmouth			7‖35 pm Bude
		PM	PM		PM		PM			PM	PM	PM	PM		PM
TORRINGTON .. dep	1	..	..	..	..	..	7 38	..		..	..	..	..	..	..
Bideford	2					..	7g51	..		..	..	..	..	..	..
Instow	3	..				..	7a57			..	..	..	..	..	..
Fremington	4					..	8a 5			..	..	..	..	..	..
ILFRACOMBE .. dep	5	..	6 30	..	..	..	..	..	..	7 42	8 0	8‖10	..	..	..
Mortehoe and Woolacombe	6		6a43	..		..	..		..	7a55	8a13	8 23	..	..	..
Braunton	7		6c55	..	..	..	..		..	8a 6	8a24	8 35	..	..	..
Wrafton	8		6a58			..	..			8a 9	8a27	....	..	..	..
Pottington Box ..	9		7 4	..		..	..			8 15	8 33	8 45	..	..	..
Barnstaple Town	10		7a 6	..		..	..	..		8c18	8c36	8 46	..	..	..
BARNSTAPLE JN. .. arr	11	..	7 9	..	..	..	8 10	..		8 21	8 39	8‖49	..	..	..
.. dep	12		7 17	..	..					8 30	8 45	....	....		
Barnstaple, Victoria Rd. arr	13	..	7 22	..	..		..	..			8 50	..			
dep	14		7 27							8 55					
Chapelton ..	15	..	..			..		..		8a37	..				
Umberleigh	16	..				..				8c43	..				
Portsmouth Arms..	17	..	..			..				8a50	..				
Kings Nympton	18	..	..			..		..		8a56	..				
Eggesford	19	..				..	..			9c 5	..				
Lapford	20	..				..	..			9c14	..				
Morchard Road ..	21	..				..	..			9a20	..	..			
Copplestone	22	..								9a25					
PLYMOUTH FRIARY ..	23	..	..	..	..	7 10	..	..		..	..	..	..	..	..
Friary Jn.	24		..			7 12	..	..					..		
Mount Gould Jn. ..	25	..				7 13		..					..		
Lipson Jn.	26					7 14		..							
PLYMOUTH arr	27					7 18	..								
NORTH ROAD dep	28			..		7 21	..	..				..	..		
Devonport Jn. ..	29		..	..		7 23		..					..		
Devonport, Kings Road	30	..		..		7e27		..					..		
Ford ..	31	..		..		7 30½	..	..					..		
St. Budeaux, Victoria Road..	32					7 35		..					..		
Tamerton Foliot ..	33	..		..		7 39½	..	..					..		
Bere Ferrers	34			..		7a45							..		
Bere Alston .. .. arr	35					7 54	..	..					..		
dep	36					7 56	..	..		....		..			
TAVISTOCK NORTH ..	37			..		8b 9	..	..		..		..			
Brentor	38			..		8b21½		..				..			
Lydford	39			..		8 26	..	..							
Bridestowe	40					8a34	..					..			
Meldon Jn. ..	41		..			8 42	..	..							
Quarry Halt	42	..													8 54
OKEHAMPTON .. arr	43			..		8 46	..	..				..			8 58
.... dep	44					8 52	..	..							9 19
Sampford Courtenay ..	45					8a59									
North Tawton	46	..				9a 5	..	..				..			
Bow.. ..	47		..	..		9a12	..					..			
Coleford Jn.	48		..			9 18				9 28			..		9 42
YEOFORD .. .. arr	49	..				9 20		..		9 30			..		9 44
.... dep	50	..				9 22				9 31			..		9 46
Crediton.. ..	51	..				..		..		9c39			..		..
Newton St. Cyres..	52	..	..	..		..				9a45	..				..
Cowley Bridge Jn. ..	53		..	..		9 34		..		9 50	..		..		10 9
Exeter St. Davids	54		..	..		9 37	..			9 53			..		10 12
.. .. dep	55	..	..	..		9 45				10 4			..		10 14
EXETER CENTRAL arr	56		..	..		9 48				10 7					10 17
dep	57	9 15		..	9 45	..						10 15	..	10 18	10 22
St. James' Park Halt....	58	..	..	..	..	..	..						..		....
Exmouth Jn.	59	9 18	..		9 48	..	..			..		10 18	..	10 21	10‖25
Pinhoe	60	..	..	..			..	..					..	10a25	....
Broad Clyst ..	61	..	..	..	..	..	..						..	10c30	..
Whimple	62	..	..	..	..		..						..	10a37	....
SIDMOUTH JN. .. arr	63	..	..	..	..		..						..	10 44	..
.... dep	64	..	..		..		..							10 46	
Honiton	65	..	..	..	..		..							10 53	
SEATON JN........ arr	66	..	..	..	..									..	
.. .. dep	67	..	..	..	..									..	
Axminster .. arr	68	..	..	..	..		..							..	
.. .. .. dep	69	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Chard Jn. .. arr	70	..	..		..		..							..	
.. .. .. dep	71	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Crewkerne..	72	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Sutton Bingham ..	73	..	..	..	..		..							..	
YEOVIL JN. .... arr	74	..	..	..	..		..							..	
.. dep	75	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Sherborne	76	..	..	..	..									..	
Milborne Port	77	..	..	..	..		..							..	
TEMPLECOMBE .... arr	78	..	..	..	..		..							..	
.. dep	79	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Gillingham	80	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Semley	81	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Tisbury ..	82	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Dinton	83	..	..	..	..		..							..	
Wilton South....	84	..	..	..	..		..							..	
SALISBURY .. arr	85	..	..	..	..		..							..	
.. dep	86	..	..	..	..		..							..	
WATERLOO .. .. arr	87	..	..	..	..		..							..	

Notes in columns:
- Guard to collect tickets at Chapelton
- Until 7th September inclusive
- 14th September only
- Guard to collect tickets and extinguish lights at Broad Clyst, also collect tickets at Sidmouth Jn.

BLOCK BELL – BUT FROM WHICH BOX?

Www.junctionrailwayana.com stock a fantastic range of railwayana, but when we discovered the site, we were already too late for this block bell. There is clearly an error in the description below, because there wasn't a "Braunton and Woolacombe" station. Braunton to Mortehoe was a block section, except on busy summer Saturdays, when Heddon Mill was switched in to divide the long section. So which box (with a cottage) did this bell come from? If you know, please email info@combe-rail.org.uk

A very nice railwayana set-up is this Great Western Railway early pattern E.T.S (electric token system) tapperless block bell on its shelf with 3 Ivorine plates and a porcelain switch. This came from the small box at Braunton and Woolacombe station on the LSWR Ilfracombe to Barnstaple line. This location had 2 level crossings, one controlled from a signal box at the station and a second controlled from a ground frame. The line was jointly signalled by the LSWR and the GWR, this instrument was in the crossing box where the crossing keeper lived next in the house adjacent to it. This instrument has a switch with a pair of Ivorine plates SIGNAL BOX and COTTAGE. When on duty the resident crossing keeper or a relief signalman would have the bell switch set to signal box, when the resident keeper was their they could be in their house and have the switch set to divert to another bell in the house. This is a super instrument and in excellent condition and in full working order.

CHILDHOOD RAILWAY MEMORIES from ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM

Alan Knowles (early 1960's)
We always played up there all the time, even though it wasn't allowed. We lived at No.1 Slade Valley and would see the trains come in and out. One time, we sneaked up to the reservoir and got on the railway line. I heard a voice shouting "Alan!, Alan!" It was my Uncle Stuart. He worked on the railways. We were put on the buggy and taked back to the station. In the tunnel there were places you could stand in. Me and a couple of lads went into the tunnel. "Train's coming Train!" so we hid. Cor, we were so lucky! It was so dark. One of the linesmen was in the tunnel. I felt his hand on my shoulder. He waited till the train had gone - if he'd called out before, we'd have scarpered and probably been killed. We used to buy a platform ticket and go on the train to Mortehoe Station. We'd get off and then get on the next train back. We never got caught. We never had any money but we used to put pennies on the line. They got squashed and came out huge.

Grenville Lindley
My dad was a shunter on the railway and did portering as well. Towards the end he worked the crossings between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple. I was up there all the time. I'd collect train numbers on a summer Saturday and meet my dad from work. I'd get home from school, cut across the Cairn and see the engines and watch them turn on the turntable, fill up with water and reverse back to the train. I was friends with Alan Knowles. We used to put pennies on the track and get them flattened by the steam engine. When I was a boy we stood in the middle of the tunnel when a steam train went through - sparks everywhere! We'd build camps with fish boxes in the goods yard and the coal yard. I remember there was a derailment, the goods trucks were all at funny angles. It must have been in the 1960s.

Gerald Lane
I remember when I used to take my trolley up on the Cairn. I suppose by this time I must have been 10 or 12 and I used to enjoy watching the engines shunting or being turned on the turntable. This I found fascinating, as it was usually only one man making this huge powerful locomotive revolve.

Pete Robbins
My memories of the railway in Combe are much the same as most of the lads of my age. We spent many an hour leaning over the railings at the path that was near the turntable, watching the locomotives being turned ready for the outgoing journey up to Morte. Always fascinated that one man with no difficulty could push such a large engine round.

Paul Weatherbed
In the early 1950's my Gran lived in a thatched cottage at Velator. I remember sitting in the mud in her apple orchard. The Devon Belle went by and frightened me to death. A lot of the time I went train spotting at Ilfracombe Station, winter and summer and watched the locomotives come in. I'd buy a 1d platform ticket and spend the whole day there. If we knew the guardsman, he'd take us in the guard's van down to Barnstaple. We'd run up and down the train counting the number of passengers for him. 1958-62 In the summer my parents had three shops in Ilfracombe. My father used to give me two lots of 17/6. One lot I'd use for a week's Rail Rover Ticket to go down as far as Plymouth, Exmouth and up to Exeter. At Polsloe Bridge Halt, Exmouth Junction, we'd go in the engine shed and get all the numbers before we asked if we could look around the shed. They always said no, but we'd already got the numbers. We'd get the 16.15 back to Ilfracombe from Exeter Central. Neil Holloway's mum and dad ran Southcombe's in the High Street. Mrs Holloway would load us up with pasties and cakes and off we'd go for a day train spotting. They didn't use to worry then.

While on Ilfracombe Station, we'd get oily rags from the fireman or driver and clean the nameplates. We'd be on number one platform and clean the nameplates on the right hand side and then go up to the turntable on the footplate and help turn the loco round and then clean the nameplates on the other side.

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